

Woodstock Planning & Zoning Commission

SPECIAL PLANNING MEETING

Thursday, November 4, 2021

7:30PM

WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL, MEETING ROOM 1

Members of the public are highly recommended to wear masks in the Town Hall.

1. Call to Order: Jeffrey Gordon called meeting to order at 7:34pm

a. Roll Call

Members Present- Jeffrey Gordon (Chair), Jeffrey Marcotte, Joseph Adiletta, Mark Blackmer, Gail Dickinson (attended via Zoom), Nancy Fraser (attended via Zoom), Doug Porter (Alternate, attended via Zoom), Syd Blodgett, Dean Gould (Alternate), David Morse, Timothy Young. Note for the record- Quorum.

Members Absent- Dwight Ryniewicz (Alternate)

Others Present- Ashley Stephens (ZEO), Delia Fey (Town Planner), Recording Secretary Amy Monahan

b. Designation of Alternates- Dean Gould was seated as Alternate until David Morse arrived at 7:40. Dean Gould was removed from alternate seat at that time.

c. Pledge of Allegiance: Jeffery Marcotte lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

NOTE: The state statute currently allows for in person meetings unless quorum or more requests virtual meetings. Doug Porter, Gail Dickinson and Nancy Fraser have chosen to attend this meeting virtually. Because of virtual attendance, this meeting is being recorded. This procedure has been reviewed and approved by Town Attorney Richard Roberts.

2. Chair's Report

a. Congratulations to Joe Adiletta and Syd Blodgett and Doug Porter on their re-election for an additional term on the Planning and Zoning Commission.

b. The Commission will welcome a new member, Joe Polulech, officially at our next Regular Meeting on November 18, 2021.

c. This is the last meeting for Gail Dickinson as she is retiring from the commission after 20 years of service.

i. ***Motion** made by Chairman Jeffrey Gordon that the Woodstock Planning and Zoning Commission officially and publicly thanks Gail Dickinson for her 20 years of service on the Commission and for her work in our community. **Seconded** by Joe Adiletta. The **motion passed unanimously** with Gail Dickinson abstaining.

d. Reminder to the Commission that there is a Regular Meeting in 2 weeks and possibly include the annual review of bi-laws.

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3. Planning Discussion

- a. Chairman Gordon started by reviewing past discussion topics and referenced the definitions document. Reference made to the memo sent to commission and definitions used in other communities.
- b. Chairman Gordon reminded of the previous discussions of:
 - i. The percentage of Agricultural- in particular, what percent of products need to come from the farm itself?
 - ii. Reference to Delia Fey's memo including the layers of permits and the table on page 6 in the Ag information document she had previously submitted to the commission.
 - iii. Layers ranging from rights for Ag all the way to large scale NON Ag events on Ag land.
- c. It was also noted that the AG Commission was invited to attend this meeting and hopefully members from the AG Commission will attend in the future.
- d. Syd Blodgett brought up the different categories of permits- as of right, special permit and zoning permit. He noted the differences between event permits and special permits and questioned the legal options available. For instance, can we grant an event permit instead of special permit which allows review and limits recurrence?
 - i. Delia Fey clarified that the town requires certain permits for tents and catering under event permits. Event permits are for a specified limited time frame in contrast to a special permit going on forever.
- e. Joe Adiletta questioned if a large scale event is permitted differently if for profit vs. private or non-profit
 - i. Delia Fey clarified that health and safety are the primary concerns for zoning and it does not matter if money is involved in the event/action in question.
- f. Chairman Gordon asked if the town does currently require event permits.
 - i. Delia clarified that the building office permits tents for safety and the fire marshal signs off if catering including cooking apparatus is involved.
- g. The distinct needs of the different codes must be remembered in planning- zoning vs. building vs. fire code
- h. Syd asked if someone wanted a special permit, would the board be able to first issue an event permit to see how the event/action goes
 - i. Consider farm vs. non-farm events and event taking place on Ag site but not being an Ag event
 - ii. Tim Young stated that one time permits allow to make adjustments between events such as:

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1. What to change
 2. How to improve
 3. Traffic process
- iii. Chairman Gordon noted that some towns decide scope of event by number of cars/parking and issues that may arise from events changing over time in size and/or activities.
 - i. Reference the option of site plan review- which is between zoning permit and special permits. Site plan review allows the decisions based on level of business- whether we should create an AG permit and what type of permits do we want?
 - i. Delia noted that requirements for site plan review might be in statutes
 - ii. Jeff Gordon will check with Attorney Rich Roberts
 - iii. Joe Adiletta commented the logic of something like site plan review because of the current transitions in the Agriculture Industry.
 - j. Tim Young stated the need of promoting Ag and how some rules can make reasonable costs unreasonable to promote Ag. Because of this, there are times to take into consideration of profit vs. nonprofit activities
 - k. Jeff Gordon noted that some communities have built lighting, signage and traffic flow into regulations for large AG events in addition to the standard public safety concerns.
 - l. Tim Young recommended different stages of activity. Having 3 or 4 options instead of simply large and small scale
 - m. Joe Adiletta noted that the definition of farm in the town of Simsbury was much more specific than Woodstock definition and included acreage/size qualifications. His concern is single family residences being classified as Ag to get allowances by right
 - i. Delia noted that assessor has definition of Ag/farm and the ZEO would visit to see if compliant with definition. She also stated that it is a good thing that Woodstock does not restrict size as it is a “farm friendly” town.
 - ii. Tim Young referenced the state requirements and USDA requirements to become a farm. They are two agencies with already set criteria.
 - iii. Dean Gould brought up the concept of hobby farm as way to allow right to farm and limit buildings and improvements accordingly.
 - iv. Gail Dickinson mentioned Tiny Acre Farm which is an active small scale farm operation.
 - n. Syd Blodgett commented on the state definition including forestry in Agriculture and the many possible avenues and outlets for products.

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- i. Discussion on what is considered Ag if the sawmill now sells wood crafts brought the commission back to % from farm/land and how/where created.
- o. The focus is what is produced/grown/made on the farm vs imported and sold. The % of retail net from farms is the key issue.
- p. Local farm products from surrounding community vs out of state/region farm is concern as well
 - i. Dave Morse mentioned the State of CT has a definition of local Agriculture
 - ii. We have unique concern being on a state border. Dean Gould mentioned that his family owns farmland in both CT and MA
 - iii. Jeff Gordon will refer to Rich Roberts for any legal clarification.
 - iv. Jeff Gordon also referenced other towns regulations that lay out percentages of product that must come from the farm sold at farm stands and farm stores as well as the percentages of other Ag products.
 - 1. What is an agricultural product? Is a birdhouse? Shavings?
- q. Mark Blackmer brought up the example of the Biodigester to raise the following concerns: Is it a commercial permit or an agricultural permit? Does ownership matter? Some are owned by investors and some by farmers. In terms of ownership- the biggest farm in CT is owned by investors.
 - i. Jeff Gordon reference previous discussion about where product for digester is coming from. Is it from the farm or hauled into the farm?
 - ii. Delia Fey commented on the benefit of biodigester being nutrient management- a USDA concern more important than ownership.
 - iii. Tim Young stated the importance of biodigester contingency plans in case a farm fails or ownership/use changes.
- r. Tim Young will get the numbers for the following meeting/discussion
 - i. USDA percentage requirements to be a farmer
 - ii. State percentage requirements to be a farmer
- s. Jeff Gordon will pull assessor requirements and information including the new ordinance change. He will also find old documents pertaining to Ag and resend to the commission.

4. Adjournment

***Motion** was made by Tim Young and **Seconded** by David Morse to adjourn. **The motion passed unanimously.** The meeting adjourned at 8:58 pm.

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Respectfully submitted by Amy Monahan, Recording Secretary.

DISCLAIMER: These minutes have not yet been approved by the PZC. Please refer to next month's minutes for approval/amendments.